

## The Representation of 'Building Events' in Wim Wenders' *Cathedrals of Culture*

The shared capacity of architecture and film to render dimensions of space and time has been the subject of reflection throughout film history. In his essay *Montage and Architecture* Eisenstein draws an artistic lineage between film and architecture as its “ancestor”. Film, he notes, is the only art form “capable of fixing the total representation of a phenomenon in its full multi-dimensionality” (1989, 112). Using diagrams from Auguste Choisy's *Histoire de l'architecture* of the Acropolis he describes this architectural ensemble as a form of montage created by the path that a spectator takes through “a series of carefully disposed phenomena which he absorbed with his visual sense”. For Eisenstein this spectatorial engagement is prototypical for viewing films where “diverse impressions [are] passing in front of an immobile spectator”: Here a viewers' mind is taken on an imaginary “path across a multiplicity of phenomena, far apart in time and space, gathering certain sequences into a meaningful concept” (1989, 111). Eisenstein's reflections on movement and montage draw on the very images which Le Corbusier had used previously in his collection of programmatic essays about new forms of interaction between buildings and humans, *Vers une architecture* (1923). Choisy's drawings underlie the development of his concept of the “promenade architecturale” in which the order of an architectural ensemble is brought to life in interaction with a spectator's movement through a building.

The engagement of non-fiction film with architecture has been predominantly thematic focusing on biopic approaches to architect's work (e.g. *Sketches of Frank Gehry*, by Sydney Pollack) processes of planning and building processes (e.g. *Citizen Architect*, Sam Wainwright Douglas, *Monument to The Dream*, Charles Guggenheim) or architectural styles (Architectures). The approach taken by directors in Wim Wenders' *Cathedrals of Culture* takes a markedly different approach and one that is more in line with films such as *Barbicana* (2014) from Ila Beka and Louise Lemoine's series of shorts on *Living Architecture* or Gan Eden's *Koolhaas HouseLife* (2008). The interaction between people and space is at the heart of this anthology film created by six directors on what buildings would say if they could tell their story. Its investigation of the title's hypothesis advances Wenders' long-standing exploration into the artistic potential of 3D in a documentary context. *If Buildings Could Talk* (2010) is the title of what might be considered to be a pilot project for *Cathedrals of Culture*. This 12 minute 3 D short film about the Rolex Learning Centre in Lausanne, Switzerland was projected in an endless loop that reflects the sweeping, circular design of the building this installation was accompanied by a voice-over which responds to the hypothesis of the title. Wenders' *Pina* (2011) explored human movement in space as it presents the work of the famous choreographer Pina Bausch in 3D.

The buildings featured in *Cathedrals of Culture* reflect a collective commitment to a number

of social practices. However, they are not simply the backdrop to which human behaviour is played out. Instead they themselves play an active role in shaping human lives. Spaces of culture and artistic performance are presented in Margreth Olith's portrayal of the boldly modern, light and spacious Oslo Opera House (2008), and Wenders' own contribution is on the Philharmonie in Berlin (1963), a circus-tent like concert hall with a golden outer skin and a concert hall which combines five pentagons into an asymmetric spatial structure. Karim Ainouz shows the iconoclastic, multifunctional culture machine that is the Parisian Pompidou Centre (1977). Michael Glawogger's piece focuses on the neoclassical National Library of Russia (built in 1795) as a labyrinthine archive and one of the world's largest repositories of printed knowledge and thought. The Danish director, Michael Madsen selects the functional architecture of Norway's Halden (built in 2010) high-security prison. Robert Redford's choice falls on the Salk Institute (built in 1960), a research facility for biological studies in California.

The materiality of these buildings provides the basis of the six films. They are the point of departure for an exploration of the way in which they divest themselves of "the mental task of real buildings" to "structure our being-in-the-world and to articulate the surface between the experiencing self and the world" (Pallasmaa 2001, 60). This phenomenological approach to buildings and place is of particular interest in analysing three distinct cinematic itineraries through the Berlin Philharmonie, Halden Prison and the National Library of Russia. This paper focuses on three of the contributions to *Cathedrals of Culture*. These selected case-studies highlight the diversity of approaches that filmmakers have taken to the representation of architectural spaces and their use of devices such as voice-over, camera mobility or 3D in the construction of this.

This analysis is contextualised within a fluid sense of place, drawing on a theoretical framework from cultural geography. While geographers traditionally accepted a binary divide between structure and agency, more recent studies have become concerned with what might be called "impure structures", which contain both structure and agency, actors and networks (Hubbard et al. 2004, 204). This 'actor-network' theory is highly relevant for the relationship between buildings as physical structures and human agency which, using Latour's term (1993), we might call building "hybrids". Rather than focusing on the physical divide between buildings and humans in our essay, we are concerned with the anthropomorphisation of these buildings and the web of movements of both camera and people through them. We explore what might be called "the co-constitution of humans and buildings" (Rose et al. 2010) in each of our three case-studies. As Anderson (2005, 255) remarks, places are not just a medium. They are "also an outcome of action, producing and being produced through human practice". The contributions to *Cathedrals of Culture* bring into view "how the coherent given-ness of [a] seemingly self-evident "thing" is variously made or unmade" (Jacobs 2006, 3). It is in this sense that *Cathedrals of Culture* stages what Jacobs describes as 'building events' (2006, 11).

### ***The Berlin Philharmonie – The Utopia of an Open Society***

A stylistically unifying feature across Wenders' anthology film is its voice-over narration.

The very first words of the voice-over in Wenders' contribution on the Berlin Philharmonie establishes a human perspective as the viewer is addressed with: "Hello, lovely to see you! I don't mean the house technician there stamping over my roof, but you!". With this, the building is given a voice which it uses to flaunt its ability to see within and beyond the diegesis and to interact with its audience. That it is very much of the world is also emphasised when it introduces to us to people "who have grown very dear to my heart" such as a long-standing member of the orchestra, the architect Hans Scharoun, a member of the building's maintenance team, and not least the conductors who have shaped the reputation of the Philharmonie. The film's anthropomorphic approach to presenting the building is further developed when the voice-over tells us that it was "born" in 1963, and when it refers to its "spiritual father", Hans Scharoun.

The "I" which the voice-over constructs is highly knowledgeable beyond the spatial confines of its walls and its musical function: it is described as being located within the history of the Cold War, the topography of a divided and reunified Germany and the architectural context of concert hall design. The symbolic significance inscribed in its materiality is the "the utopia of an open society" which was borne out of a singular historical moment: "Maybe", the commentary notes, "it was only possible to create such an open public space .... under the social democracy of governing mayor, Willy Brandt".

This voice-over also asserts its ability to call forth imagery which corroborates its account and thus to represent itself in more than merely a verbal fashion. In so doing, it gestures obliquely towards perceptions about the dramatic reconstruction of historical scenes in a documentary context. Thus a black and white enacted passage showing Hans Scharoun as he inspects the building is accompanied by the plea: "Forgive me for presenting him to you so vividly". To this, a bronze bust of the architect comes alive, and a fictive Scharoun step out from the black and white footage to commence his circuit around the building. The wide-ranging knowledgeability of the voice-over narration is further corroborated by historical footage such as sequence which show Herbert von Karajan as he officially initiates work on the Philharmonic.

Kozloff describes the voice-over as a naturalizing device which turns an anonymous 'impersonal narrative agency' into a 'humanized and tamed' source of narration (Kozloff 1988, 128). In Wenders' film the choice of a 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective, its prosody and elements of its diction construct a perspective which is not only humanized but also suggests an identity, personality and subjective experience. In her study of forms of voice-over address in non-fiction films Bruzzi identifies "increased personalisation" as the most consistently used means

of diverting from more conventional expository voice-over constructions. Personalisation, she suggests, is not only conveyed through what is said but how and by whom it is said (Bruzzi 2006, 62).

The voice-over to Wenders' contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture* is spoken by the German actress and singer Merete Becker. As such the film reflects the increased use of female speakers in non-fiction film since the 1970s identified by Bruzzi. This choice of a female speaker to represent the building contrasts with the voice-over account of a building that reflects 50 years of achievement by exceptional men. Among these are its architect, Willy Brandt, the Berlin mayor at the time of its inception and construction; Helmut Stern, an eminent member of the orchestra and finally the conductors, whose names the international status of the orchestra is closely associated with, Herbert von Karajan, Claudio Abbado and the present incumbent Simon Rattle. The decision to overlay a female voiceover in this contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture* invokes Lefebvre's idea (1974) of the 'conceived' space - the privileged "male" domain of architects, urban planners and technocrats who conceptualise public spaces such as the Philharmonie. In *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre turns his attention to the concept of social space with reference to the social context of space. His conclusion is that space is not an empty location in which people act. Instead space shapes our lives. His spatial analysis of space is tripartite. To the physical (perceived) and (conceived) mental space, Lefebvre adds the dimension of lived space – although these dimensions were a synthesis rather than individual compartments.

As noted above, the Philharmonie is presented as a patriarchal product, conceived and perpetuated by an assortment of men. Wenders' feminisation of this conceived space through the voice influences the film viewer's experience of the physical, or as Lefebvre calls it, 'perceived' space of the building itself. As we are taken on a grand tour of the Philharmonie, Becker's voice reminds us that the edifice has the power to graciously indulge its transient cast of male architects and conductors. The building ushers out these authorised conceivers of her own structural body whilst presiding over the daily social interactions and inner-workings that inform the Philharmonie's construction as a 'lived' space.

As Bruzzi notes, the choice of a female voice-over narrator may carry semantic connotations in documentary film. By contrast to the dominant convention of male voice-over narration it frequently serves as an "overt tool for exposing the untenability of documentary's belief in its capacity for imparting 'generalised truths' faithfully and unproblematically". The female narrator may come to signal "not the voice of universality but of specificity" and the expression of an inner self (Bruzzi 2006, 66).

An ambiguity about what kind of voice speaks from behind the "mask put on something that may not even have a face" (Riffaterre 1958: 108) pervades Wenders' film. In *The Berlin Philharmonic* an elaborate projection of the building's subjective voice does not imply a

reticence with regard to providing an authoritative account about the building, rather the truth claims of this authoritative account are further ratified by reference to the lived experience of the building.

The voice-over's establishment of an anthropomorphic perspective for a building suggest an access to its "inner life" or a personality. This immersion in the building is visually supported by the use of 3D. Wenders attributes a transformative potential to 3D that extends far beyond the limitations of a technologically advanced "cinema of attraction". In a documentary context this, he suggests, "could really push the entire genre to a whole new level" ([http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Pressbooklet\\_eng\\_small3.pdf](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Pressbooklet_eng_small3.pdf)). He highlights in particular the technology's capability of providing "a heightened sense of immersion" and "real spatial experience". In the debate about the aesthetic potential of 3D, Wenders' statement is redolent of Elsaesser's assessment of 3D as "likely to evolve towards extending the expressive as well as conceptual register of post-Euclidian space". This, he suggests "may enlarge the scope of perceptual responses" and "deepen the affective engagement of the spectator" (Elsaesser 2013, 240).

The final sequence of *The Berlin Philharmonie* resonates with such potential. It revolves around the Philharmonie's famed concert hall as the "beating heart" of the building. In it members of the audience and the orchestra are shown to converge in the instance of musical performance, and it is through it that the revolutionary design of the concert hall, is made to resonate with the social aspiration of a collective of individuals. In the words of the voice-over:

Giving up the central viewer's perspective was nothing less than a revolution. My seating blocks staggered against one another lead the eyes of the audience in different directions. The individual sections each have as many seats as the big orchestra has members. Even the musicians feel the difference. They no longer play at the end of the room but rather in the centre and can actually sense the attention of the audience. Scharoun did not want to treat all listeners alike. Putting the undifferentiated mass he thought into the old shoebox concert halls would also lead to undifferentiated individuals. Instead he tried to create a space in which each listener could develop a distinct sense of self.

In the shot which accompanies this statement, the film's audience is gathered into the fold of the concert audience. In an instance of "emergence" (cf. William 1993) which has been reviewed as possibly "the most stunning 3D shot in film", the backs of the spectators "jump out of the screen right in front of the film viewers in an incredible optical illusion". (<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/cathedrals-culture-berlin-review-678678>). This "illusion" is made even more striking in conjunction with Wenders' representation of the hall's acoustics through his use of stereophonic sound. Here a mode of reception, intrinsically

linked to a space which engenders a process of individuation within a collective, seems to be extended to the modality of film: A novel form of experiencing music which differentiates rather than homogenises its audience, meets a novel form of embodied filmic experience in which a “heightened” form of “immersion... puts the viewer like never before ‘into a place’” (chicagofilmfestival.com). The above scene crystallizes a conception of space constituted through human practice and reified through the act of performance and reception, of space which is not “consumed” but constantly “reproduced” (Llewellyn 2004, 230).

The presentation of architectural space as fluid and ever emerging at the intersection of human and non-human processes, coexists with claiming the building as an architectural manifestation of a version of the narrative of post-war German history, as emblem of a revised “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) From this perspective the Philharmonic is presented as “resounding body for the young Federal Republic, the utopian image of a society composed of all walks of life”, which had “to stand its ground against the “grim rival structure” of GDR architecture “started right in front of my door, just 100 meters away”. Complemented later by Mies van der Rohe’s National Gallery and Scharoun’s Nationalbibliothek and part of a reunified Germany it is described as the “jewel” of a cultural centre that expresses the modernity of “a new country” and “a new city”.

In the context of *The Berlin Philharmonic* the use of a female voice-over narrator opens up a space of critical reflection of elements of the official narrative that has been constructed around the building. However, ultimately Wenders’ voice-over “reserves for itself a high degree of epistemic authority” (Plantinga 1997, 107) and this authority is ratified by the authority of experience that is claimed through the presentation of the building as sentient being.

### ***Halden - I Have a Thousand Eyes***

Michael Madsen’s film *Into Eternity. A Film for the Future* (2010) follows the construction of Onkalo, a nuclear waste facility in Finland, described by Madsen as “the first post-human structure” (<http://assemblepapers.com.au/2014/10/31/michael-madsen-interview-cathedrals-of-culture/>) as it is designed to store radio-active waste for at least 100,000 years. In our second case-study, Madsen’s contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture* about a high-security prison the exploration of what contemporary societies would consign to exclusion and oblivion shifts from material to human beings. Madsen’s choice of a prison building is strikingly different from the other five contributions in other ways too. As Moran et al (2016) note “there is little room for utopian thinking in the ‘building events’ of new prisons today, and few would view them as emblematic, spectacular or signature architecture” (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tran.12140/full>).

*Halden* presents architecture at its most functional, with exclusion highlighted as its

overriding rationale. Thus the opening sequence of the film shows a massive perimeter wall, the single automated metal gate and rows of bollards which protect it. Throughout, the prison complex is described as isolated from the outside world and the changes within it. As Madsen notes with reference to his rationale for portraying Halden in 3D: “The film allows the audience to experience society’s off-limit, it’s no-access as opposed to perhaps all other of society’s architectural manifestations.” ([http://www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/COC\\_Pressbooklet\\_eng\\_small2.pdf](http://www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/COC_Pressbooklet_eng_small2.pdf)).

However, if Halden shares the ultimate function of confinement with more conventional prison designs, its interior also bears the inscription of an ethos of rehabilitation rather than punishment. Described as “the world’s most humane prison”, Halden’s architectural geography features cells with large, bar-less windows, shops open to and run by inmates, well-equipped workshops, bright cafeterias, a multi-denominational prayer room, playing fields, a house which inmates and their families can inhabit for overnight stays and picturesque woodlands.

While Halden functions as a zone of exclusion, its rehabilitative mission also makes it an instrument for shaping transgressive identities with the aim of social reintegration. This shaping force of the building is an underlying theme in the film as the voice-over describes the prison’s perimeter wall as “the difference between being a prisoner and being you”. On entering the prison with a new arrival we are told by the building with a female voice-over: “I am the one who defines who you are”. In one segment of the film we see such a transformation as the new arrival is made to divest his belongings and clothes and these are prepared to be fed into a mechanically operated repository. Cells are described as “the one place where you can try to be a little bit of yourself”. Isolation cells are for people “who have chaos and frustration inside of them”, and a house for short-term family reunions with the prison “brings a lot of joy”. This sense of exclusion is heightened by the fact that inmates are never given a voice in *Halden*. As perennial subjects of representation they are not given a voice to tell us about their experience of inhabiting a space that is designed to change them.

The prison regime in Halden does allow recourse to conventionally coercive measures. This is evident when wardens are shown to put on riot gear, when we see soiled isolation cells and hear the cries of neighbouring inmates, or when cells, the prison’s sole vestiges from surveillance, are stripped down to the mattress. However, as the 1<sup>st</sup> person voice-over addresses changing sets of inmates, it highlights a less tangible and more pervasive form of control. Halden is represented as all-seeing entity which subjects its inmates to almost permanent visibility. This theme is introduced in the initial portion of the film in which we are told: “I am the one who defines who you are. I have a thousand eyes. I can see everything that goes on. And you don’t know that I can see you”. This representation of Halden as an ever monitoring presence is corroborated throughout with the imagery of camera-studded walls, monitors and other facilities for surveillance, such as glass cubicles for the prison wardens. As the camera repeatedly

circles around the inmates, 3D representation underscores the all-round observation to which the building exposes its inhabitants to a controlling agency as well as to us as observers. This exposure becomes palpable in a series of prolonged frontal shots of inmates which, in turn, direct an unflinching and expressionless gaze at the camera and the audience. The film ends on a striking variation on these soulless portrait shots. Here a solitary inmate is seen leaning against the bars of a confined segment of outside space. As the camera rests on him, his frozen countenance temporarily disintegrates into a smile before he gathers himself and re-adopts the expressionless stare he has evidently been asked to assume. The shot ends the film by flaunting the authorial presence of the filmmaker and the potential impact on what we have seen. It also creates a fleeting moment in which we are addressed by an expression of individuality. The inscription of the perennial condition of surveillance in the frozen facial expression we have encountered in the previous mugshot is rendered visible here. Madsen's use of 3D coupled with recurring fluid travelling shots place the viewer outside quotidian society and inside the network of surveillance (<http://assemblepapers.com.au/2014/10/31/michael-madsen-interview-cathedrals-of-culture/>)

A recurring image in *Halden* is that of a prison inmate in a "traditional" outfit with black and white stripes, a cell number stamped on it and weighed down by a ball and chain. A larger than life print of this adorns the prison wall and T-shirts produced in the prison workshop. The convict in this image is about to hurl the metal ball, yet the chain is still attached to his ankle. In the context of Halden, this picture appears to proffer an ironic commentary on an antiquated prison system. In the context of Madsen's film, it becomes a visual shorthand for the paradox which Halden harbours. This has jettisoned conventional features and discourses of punishment for a more humane approach, but this shift relies on a "state-of-the-art rehabilitation technology" (<http://www.distribution.metrodomegroup.com/sites/default/files/Cathedrals%20Of%20Culture%20Prod%20Notes.pdf>). Ball and chains have been done away with but inmates remain not less, but less-visibly tethered.

Madsen's filmic itinerary along the building's functional sub-segments is accompanied by a voice-over which has all the hallmarks of being unscripted. The agency behind the projected identity of Halden is revealed through a pre-filmic title. These "prison reflections" originate with and are spoken by the prison psychologist, Benedicte C. Westin. Statements about the presumed psychological mechanisms of Halden are made in simple and almost naïve language and their slightly hesitant and at times reflective delivery reflects their on-going verbal construction. In striking contrast to the form and register of the voice-over, Halden is "made to talk" by a speaker who represents institutional power and a central area of expertise which underlies its power to transform. Empathetic and often defensive or even apologetic in tone, the voice-over addresses the inmates with statements about the workings of the building. When talking about the relative privacy afforded to inmates it counsels: "You really shouldn't



hate being with me”. When we are introduced to a house used to temporarily reunite families within the prison grounds, she notes: “I know it is in inside the prison, but the house and the garden are almost like an ordinary little house”. As the voice-over speaks about isolation cells, it justifies their existence: “That’s my job and I think my job is needed”. Even statements about the need for prison rules, and rules about the consequences of their violation, are cast in strikingly tentative terms: “in one way that feels good, or else this little society will collapse”. The first person voice-over presents power as depersonalized and vested in the building, but by its delivery and diction, by staging a personal and conciliatory plea for compliance with it, it attenuates the prison’s utilitarian psychological functionality,

Halden, as presented by the voice-over, is a self-contained universe. Though professing to be curious about what may lie beyond its perimeter wall it is described as having no connection with or knowledge about it. A pre-filmic shot displaying a quotation from Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* suggests a very different perspective. In Foucault’s study of the history of penal culture, the panopticon, an 18<sup>th</sup> century prison design by Jeremy Bentham, in which an entire prison population is controlled by being visible from the position of one warden, manifests a physically non-coercive form of power that is internalized by the individual. Madsen echoes Foucault’s question: “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospital which all resemble prisons?” (Foucault 1997, 228). In Foucault’s discussion of expressions of power throughout history, the panopticon becomes a metaphor for forms of control which shape the very fabric of modern society. As described above, *Halden* features and ends on a series of prolonged frontal shots of inmates who direct an unflinching gaze at the camera and the audience. Against the background of Halden’s electronically facilitated panopticism, these shots stage a striking reversal of perspective: Here we become the object of a gaze. These shots reverberate with the implications of the question with which Madsen opens his film.

Doreen Massey (1984) conceives of place as a locus of complex intersections and power structures in which many elements are involved, including the body. Places are not neutral or frozen in time. Instead, they are a consequence of power structures and the social relations within and between them. Rose describes what might be called an embodied sense of place with particular emphasis on feelings (or affect theory). Her concern is with “the importance of human emotion and embodiment... as they play out in relation to the various non-human actants in a building event” (Rose et al. 2010, 338). The special relationship between the human body and a building has been described as an “affect” by Kraftl and Adey (2008, 227). In their study, buildings orchestrate human movements through them as the human body is given a certain range of actions or movements which are to be performed. Madsen’s *Halden* probes into a building in which this orchestration draws on depersonalised and self-effacing forms of power. If, as Rose et al state the making of buildings as “big things” is co-constituted by both the “materiality of buildings and humans” (2016,16) *Halden* is made to represent a highly scripted and codified interaction between both and one, the film suggests, that may be symptomatic for modern society.

Madsen's film offers no authoritative explanation and resolution to the tensions and the contradictions of Halden as a penal institution within its wider social context. He "refuses to assert explicit epistemic authority over the viewer, and does not impart a clear, high-level explanation of the phenomena it presents" (Plantinga 1997, 108). Rather, he positions viewers in an architectonic space shot through by a web of depersonalized forms of control which, the film suggests are not confined to this space of exclusion.

### ***The National Library of Russia – A Copy of Any Book Printed in This World***

Michael Glawogger's contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture* focusses on the National Library of Russia, the country's first national and her oldest public library, founded in 1795 as the Imperial Public Library. At the centre of his film is an investigation of the interaction between the labyrinthine architecture of this pre-digital library space, its silent inhabitants and officials and the talkative books. Contained within a circular structure, this investigation begins and ends with shots of the library's urban location, St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospekt. In the film's opening sequence the camera tracks pedestrians through an underground passage and as they ascend to Nevsky Prospekt, pans across the road to the library and after a cut, continues its measured progress to the inside of the building. Pans, tilts and tracks along seemingly endless library corridors and shelves, catalogue cabinets and reading rooms continue this slow movement, which is either motivated by the library assistants' unceasing errands through a labyrinthine structure, or the camera's solitary probing progress through the book filled space which we can never quite knit together into a whole. When the movement comes to a temporary halt, the camera rests on one of the library attendants as she dusts or catalogues books, stamps library chits, or waits for books to be delivered through an antiquated lift system. In the film's closing sequence, we find ourselves back in Nevsky Prospekt where, once again, the camera follows passers-by as they ascend to ground level, and it finally comes to rest on a traffic jam.

The film's imagery is accompanied by a voice-over which is constructed out of the intermittent murmur of quotations in their original Russian above which occasionally rises the strongly accented recitation of English translations by a male Russian speaker. The books include Gogol's *Nevsky Prospekt* (1835), Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Andrei Bely's *St Petersburg* (1913), Joseph Brodsky's *Less than one* (1986), Iva Bunin's *Night of Denial*, (2006) St Augustine's *Confessions*, as well as passage by Epicurus. There is also a small section of text written by Glawogger himself, entitled *I do not speak*. The library becomes the mouthpiece for these textual fragments which are delivered with a sonorous, theatrical diction which acknowledges their literary origin. They make the space resonate with centuries of human emotion and reflection.

This eclectic selection of citations enters into intermittent correspondence with the images. In one short segment of the film, voice-over and visuals seem to coalesce in an elliptical

narrative of how books were always implicated in the affairs of the world. With explicit reference to not too distant Russian history, it speaks about a time when books had to be “hidden, disowned, struck off the list”. Rendered invisible by being divesting of their library code they could be saved, and inquiries would be “met with blank stares”. A poster depicting Lenin supplies just such a stare. When the voice-over informs us that eventually books were reinstated, “that they could stir and begin their return to the front row” a library attendant steps through a door carrying a pile of books. However, in Glawogger’s *National Library of Russia*, imagery and voice-over do never fully coalesce into a narrative or rhetorical structure, it is held together by the dense stylistic texture which Glawogger weaves around this architectural space and its uses.

The very beginning of the film establishes the slow and fluid mobility with which the projected world is processed in *National Library of Russia* and contrasted with the world outside which is noisy and moving quickly. As the camera makes its way through the building there is a constant re-assembling of both the building and the bodies within it. It is almost as if the space is brought into being through the ceaseless commerce of library wardens as they navigate this winding space, shelf or stamp books, search catalogues. As Anderson notes “Places, then are not only a medium but also an outcome of action, producing and being produced through human practice” (2004, 255). The record of this constant production of space through human interaction as well as the visual fabric of books, shelves and catalogue cabinets coalesces into a dense stylistic texture which is further supported by sound. Noises, such as opening doors, the footfalls of library assistants, the crackling of Tungsten bulbs as they light up, the clicking of clocks all contribute to a soundscape by which the library is made to resonate.

The preoccupation with the material aspects of the library and the human interaction with the carrier medium it contains also draws on Glawogger’s use of 3D. A self-avowed “sceptic with regard to 3D” he describes 3D as “a formalism” (<http://derstandard.at/1389860186791/Michael-Glawogger-Das-Haptische-gewoennen-wir-uns-immer-mehr-ab>). He notes how it provided him with a tool to explore the narrow, winding spaces of the library, but also to use close-ups to bring out textural detail in filming books which preceded mass printing techniques. When, fifteen minutes into the film, illustrations and manuscripts show biblical scenes and accounts of creation from its antiquarian section, Glawogger employs 3D in close-ups to bring out the singular nature of books which bear the imprint of time’s passage. These fixed shots highlight the haptic and sensual qualities of the paper, its varied texture, and the imprint of the medium applied to it. A changed tonality of the soundtrack as the citation of quotation ceases and Orthodox church music accompanies the imagery underscores the status of this books as unique traces from the past.

A recurring motif in Glawogger's exploration of the material aspects of the library are visual and sonic manifestations of time. From our first sight of the library's insides to the film's penultimate sequence, clocks and the echo of their ticking form a recurring motif. This is interwoven with the distant resonance of classical music which seems to reverberate across from the past, and the simultaneous counterpoint of electronic sounds that invoke the present. The theme of time is introduced even before the start of the film with a quote by Alkmaen of Croton: "People degenerate because they cannot connect the end with the beginning". As a paratext to a film about one of the world's largest libraries, these words point towards the linear nature of individual time and memory. To it, the subsequent film juxtaposes the vast palimpsest of knowledge ever ready to be called up across the temporal divide between generations. The film's final quotations return to the theme of time, and human attempts to capture its shape and nature. It culminates in the question: "So, what is time? If no one asks me, I know. If I'm asked and should answer, I do not know". This soundscape charges the space before us with time as a weighty yet intangible dimension that reflects the nature of its contents. As Anderson notes: "Time alongside practice sediments meaning onto places, with personal memories meshing with cultural meanings on an individual and (potentially) societal scale" (2004, 256).

Glawogger's exploration into the materiality of the library takes an unexpected turn in the film's final portion. So far the film presents a pre-digital universe of knowledge with the rare exception of the occasional laptop which readers have taken into. Now, the camera zooms in on the screen of a reader's Kindle. As the pace rapidly accelerates, we are pulled through the screen by a vortex of indecipherable, overlapping texts to the accompaniment of a multilingual babble of voices. Next, we find ourselves back in the Nevsky Prospekt where, once again, the camera follows passers-by as they ascend to ground level until it finally comes to rest on a scene of perfect gridlock and a cacophonous concert of blaring car horns. This shot creates a palpable contrast to the purposeful transport of knowledge through the orderly and quiet world of the library; movement turns into standstill, and order is audibly unravelling. *The National Library of Russia* is an architectonic structure for the organization of knowledge. Glawogger captures this at a fundamental point of transition from material to virtual forms of storage, dissemination and reception. as the "Glawogger translates this "dematerialisation of solid into liquid carrier media of data" (Assmann, 2004 :53) into a visual metaphor which he likens to "a whirlpool – like water which drains away and ends in a kindle"

(<http://derstandard.at/1389860186791/Michael-Glawogger-Das-Haptische-gewoennen-wir-uns-immer-mehr-ab>). Glawogger's exploration of *The National Library of Russia* shows a world which emanates from books' "specific capacity as a carrier medium." The shot on which the film ends instils a sense of peril in the face of the disappearance of this world. Assmann's observations about the "age of the universal transformability of data" well captures its ominous connotations. In the digital age, she notes, it is the

corporeal and the material which are put into question. What we are in danger of losing is everything which cannot be fed into the rapid and homogeneous stream of data. However, the disappearance of the materiality of artefacts means more than just the disappearance of a mysterious aura: with it reality, history and memory disappears (Assmann 2004, 58)

Glawogger makes the space of the National Library of Russia resonate with the thoughts of generations. He presents a material world of spaces and fixtures and its interdependency with the actions of their human wardens. He shows how libraries afford a perspective through which the path from the past to the present may become materially manifest across the temporal confines of generations and how books “produce a world of collective memory according to their specific capacity as a carrier medium of a world which a mnemonic community would not know without them” (Ertl 2004, 6). Glawogger’s contribution to *Cathedrals of Culture* shows processes of making the “big thing” that is the National Library of Russian, but he also suggests its “unmaking” (Jakobs 2006:3) as the material universe of books around which the film is constructed and the deep dimensions of time they represent seem to collapse into digital simultaneity und ubiquity.

In Glawogger’s film, our attention to the material aspects of the world is made to co-exist with an engagement with the wider narrative of a dissolving material world of knowledge. It engenders a “dual spectatorial activity” (Plantinga 1997, 173) by “moving suggestively between representation and discursive opacity, and never ultimately surrendering to either”.

## **Conclusion**

Our three case studies have explored the anthropomorphisation and “inhabitation” (Kraftl & Adey 2008) of buildings from the perspective of voice-over, spatial representation and 3D. The Berlin Philharmonie is presented as a resonating symbol for democratic renewal. This building is self-aware of its symbolic and aesthetic significance and recruits images to corroborate its 1<sup>st</sup> person account. However, behind the construction of an unique personal perspective, an authorial presence shines through which claims the building for an authorised version of German history. For Wenders, the use of 3D presents the opportunity “to bring the audience into the building and gives them a perspective that is not possible with 2D”

([http://www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/COC\\_Pressbooklet\\_eng\\_small2.pdf](http://www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/COC_Pressbooklet_eng_small2.pdf)).

3D is enlisted to represent a new way of seeing a space which engenders a new way of hearing symbolizing an utopian concept of society. Our second case-study, Madsen’s *Halden* brings out the underlying tensions in the ethos of an “humane” penal institutions.

Constructing a filmic stance of epistemic reticence, he highlights the psychological rationality which underlies this facility for human re-engineering and makes us rethink the nature of power in society through the lens of this zone of social exclusion. Madsen employs 3D to interpolate the spectator in a zone of exclusion, while at the same time questioning such clear

demarcations, immersion making a rhetorical point. In our final case-study, Glawogger portrays a material repository of knowledge as a space that is created out of the interdependence between the material, the human and the conceptual world. His filmic treatment of the transformation from this physicality to digital formats, highlights the losses implied by the dissolution of the tangible fabric of thought out which he weaves his film. Glawogger's use of 3D emphasises the haptic nature of a world on the verge of its disappearance and 3D close-ups become a means of heightening the texture of the physical world.

The *promenades architectural* designed in *The Berlin Philharmonic*, *Halden* and *The National Library of Russia* engender different and novel ways of experiencing buildings. They challenge traditional notions of buildings and architecture as “static, closed and materially constant” (Jenkins 2002, 226). While such approaches “privileged the materiality the building”, geographers of architecture have in recent decades concerned themselves increasingly with the representation and meaning of buildings (Jacobs 2006, 2). As Rose notes: “A thing becomes a particular sort of building as various materials are held together in specific assemblages by work of various kinds” (2010).

The transition from a viewer's imaginary movement as s/he perceives a film and the real movement of a viewer moving through a space underlied the close connection which Eisenstein's perceived between architecture and film. Film's ability to make us experience architecture in space and time, is harnessed in *The Berlin Philharmonic*, *Halden* and *The National Library of Russia* to capture the unfolding interaction between human beings and architecture to represent the on-going work which constitutes the affective geographies of “building events”. In its use of 3D the three films invoke the conceptualization of film as a tactile art form which underlies Walter Benjamin's discussion of the affinity between architecture and film. As Pallasmaa notes, Benjamin suggests “that although the situation of viewing turns the viewer into a bodyless observer the illusory cinematic space gives the viewer back his /her body, as the experiential, haptic and motor space provides powerful kinesthetic experiences”

([http://www.ucalgary.ca/ev/designresearch/publications/insitu/copy/volume2/imprintable\\_architecture/Juhani\\_Pallasmaa/index.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/ev/designresearch/publications/insitu/copy/volume2/imprintable_architecture/Juhani_Pallasmaa/index.html)). Suggesting that the experience of space is not merely visual but that there is a haptic, embodied quality to this experience answers to calls from the field of geography of architecture “that more attention needs to be paid to affect in and as inhabitation” (2008, 228).

The three contributions to Wenders' anthology discussed above, therefore highlight diverse processes by which ‘building events’ are constructed, Weaving its own discursive constructions by such means as voice-overs these film also highlight perspectives from which we might engage with and indeed represent the built environment that surround us.

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## Filmography

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